

Appeal Process for More at Four Expansion Slots

Office of School Readiness/Department of Public Instruction

October 2007

Background: Per authorizing legislation, local More at Four (MAF) contractors **must demonstrate that they are accessing resources other than “More at Four.”** However, rapid expansion of the program across the state has placed an increasing burden on the discretionary funds controlled at the local level available to meet this requirement. The impact has been unrealized expansion for some counties resulting in an unmet need for pre-kindergarten services.

In response, the following provision was included in House Bill 1473:

SECTION 7.24.(f) If a county is unable to increase "More at Four" slots because of a documented lack of available resources necessary to provide the required local contribution for the additional slots allocated to the county for the 2007-2008 fiscal year, the contract agency for that county may appeal to the Office of School Readiness for an exception to the required local amount for those additional slots. The Office of School Readiness may grant an exception and allot funds to pay up to ninety percent (90%) of the full cost of the additional slots for that county if it finds that (i) there is in fact a documented lack of available resources in the county and (ii) granting the exception will not reduce access statewide to "More at Four" slots.

Process for Appeal: To make an appeal, the contracting agency must submit the following information (see attached form):

- **A detailed description of the funding structure for existing MAF slots placed in the county/region.** This description must identify all “other resources” currently being expended on behalf of MAF and the total cost of the MAF slot to the county. The total cost should be inclusive of the current MAF per slot rate.
- **A needs assessment.** Contractors must provide a detailed accounting of a need for additional slots. Included must be an estimation of eligible children to be served, categorized by priority (unserved versus underserved). Include numbers of eligible children of military families as this is a new category of eligibility for MAF.
- **A commitment to quality.** Contractors must describe the capacity of the county/region to expand into pre-schools that are committed to providing high-quality services, particularly those that have not participated in MAF to date.
- **Justification.** Contractors must describe past and current efforts to leverage multiple resources to support MAF and detail how those resources are now significantly strained and unavailable.

Process for Decisions: The Office of School Readiness will consider the following in awarding appeals:

- The demonstrated use of multiple resources to support existing MAF slots.
- The relative wealth of the county/region and documented lack of available resources to support additional MAF slots.
- The capacity of the county/region to meet the needs of eligible children in high-quality settings. Providing services to unserved children and eligible children of military families will be considered a priority.

Deadline: Local contractors are encouraged to submit signed, valid appeals no later than October 26, 2007.